

2005 WATCHABLE WILDLIFE PHOTO CONTEST

BY JEB WILLIAMS



DeVane Webster

Blister Beetle

DeVane Webster, Beulah

Blister beetles are common throughout the United States. Several species are found on the Great Plains during summer. This particular species, *Lytta nuttalli*, range from 1/2- to 1- inch long and have a characteristic narrow, long, soft body. The flexible wing covers are rounded over the abdomen and the color varies from black to gray to brown. Some species have a metallic sheen or conspicuous orange stripes.

Blister beetles receive their name from their ability to produce blistering on contact with human skin. What causes the blistering is an odorless substance most commonly produced by reflexive bleeding when an adult beetle is pressed or rubbed.

While blister beetles have somewhat of a bad reputation, they do have a positive side. Female blister beetles lay clusters of eggs in the soil in late summer. The small, active larvae that hatch from these eggs crawl into cracks in the soil in search of grasshopper egg pods to feed on. Blister beetle numbers increase dramatically following high grasshopper populations.

Additionally, the odorless substance released by blister beetles was for centuries prescribed as a cure for a variety of ailments including gout, rheumatism and many other medical ailments.

NONGAME CATEGORY



Warning: The poster winner for the 2005 Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest can cause blistering on contact. But it looks good through a camera lens.

The blister beetle, photographed by DeVane Webster of Beulah, was chosen to appear on the poster promoting the Watchable Wildlife tax check-off on your state tax form.

Each year, both professional and amateur photographers submit hundreds of photographs to the photo contest, making judging difficult. This year was no exception, with about 65 contestants submitting more than 400 photographs.

Judges base their choices on overall composition, degree of difficulty in finding and photographing the subject, uniqueness, sharpness and color quality. The promotional tax check-off poster winner is selected from the nongame category.

While the beetle captured by Webster appears to be a harmless, colorful “bug,”

think again. This bug has a story to tell, rivaling the porcupine in terms of defense mechanisms used to fend off predators. Webster is a first-time contributor to the photo contest and his quality of work impressed judges. In addition to the blister beetle, a photo of two American avocets in fall plumage also received winning honors in the nongame category.

Thanks to all of our participants who took time to share their outdoor memories. We encourage anyone with an interest or experience in wildlife photography to enter their photographs in the Watchable Wildlife Photo Contest. The deadline to submit photos is September 30. You can review the rules on the Department's website at gf.nd.gov or call Jeb Williams at 328-6332.

JEB WILLIAMS is an outreach biologist with the Game and Fish Department.

American White Pelicans

J.C. Hauge, Mandan

Four American white pelicans and ring-billed gulls loaf onshore at Lake Tschida in southwestern North Dakota. Pelicans are large water birds with wingspans of up to 8 feet, easily identified by their huge bills and large pouches used for capturing prey.

Pelicans are primarily fish eaters – typically consuming perch, trout, carp and catfish – but also prey on salamanders. In spring 2004, white pelicans mysteriously abandoned nesting grounds at Chase Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Stutsman County. For years, Chase Lake had been recognized as home to the largest white pelican breeding colony in North America. Currently, research is underway to try to determine why many birds have abandoned Chase Lake after more than 100 years of use.



J.C. Hauge



American Avocets

DeVane Webster

Beulah



DeVane Webster

American avocets are tall, thin shorebirds, with long, slender bills, legs and necks used for feeding on

aquatic invertebrates in shallow wetlands. Female avocet plumages are similar to those of males, but females usually have shorter, more upturned bills. The avocets captured in this photo are in fall plumage, a less spectacular version compared to spring when striking black, white and rusty colors easily catch your eye.

Avocets typically begin nesting in May. Both the male and female incubate the eggs.

GAME CATEGORY



Robert Fenstermacker

Pronghorn

Robert Fenstermacker, Bismarck

The pronghorn, an inhabitant of North Dakota's wide open spaces, is the fastest North American mammal, reaching speeds up to 50 miles per hour. Pronghorns are true American natives, found nowhere else in the world, having roamed the plains and deserts of North America for at least the last million years.

Equipped with exceptional vision, along with a good sense of hearing and smell, the pronghorn can be wary and elusive at times. Both male and female grow horns and are the only horned animals in the world that shed their horns annually.

Autumn signals the beginning of the intensive mating season where territorial bucks become especially aggressive in defending their areas. Young are born in late May or early June with a high percentage of the births being twins. At birth, fawns weigh 5-6 pounds and lack spots that are characteristic of deer and elk fawns. Newborns instinctively lie motionless for hours to protect themselves from predators.

PLANT CATEGORY

Spiderwort

Dwight Bohnet
Bismarck

Spiderwort, found mostly in the southern half of North Dakota in moist prairies, road ditches and light-textured soils, blooms in late May to early August. Two species exist, the bracted spiderwort and prairie spiderwort. The main difference is the width of their leaves.

When spiderwort stems are broken, a stringy substance appears resembling a spider web. Plains Indians ate entire plants either in salads or cooked with various dishes.



Dwight Bohnet



Red Squirrel

Kelly Krabbenhoft, Fargo

The red squirrel, a small squirrel with reddish to reddish-gray fur on top and a white or cream underside, is found in the eastern third of North Dakota. It has white around its eyes and can be found mostly in forested habitat.

The red squirrel constructs its nest in branches or cavities of trees or stumps. In winter, it lives on food diligently stored during late summer or fall. A single cache may contain several hundred spruce or pine cones. Mating season is in late winter. About a month after mating, the female will have a litter of three to seven young, which are weaned after seven or eight weeks. Young leave their mother at about 18 weeks.



Kelly Krabbenhoft